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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 002798

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: KING SHUFFLES THE ROYAL COURT, CALLS PARLIAMENT TO
SESSION

REF: A. AMMAN 2673

[1](#)B. AMMAN 2671

[1](#)C. AMMAN 1455

[1](#)D. AMMAN 1984

[1](#)E. AMMAN 2757

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Last week saw the culmination of recent rumors as Royal Court Chief Bassem Awadallah stepped down and was replaced by East Banker Nasser Al-Lozi. In Lozi, King Abdullah has found the desired centrist, establishment figure to rebuild relationships following the departure of his controversial predecessor. The Royal Court shake-up also included the Directorate of Communications and Information, with Ayman Safadi named as Director and advisor to the King, presumably to implement the King's agenda for media reform while sharpening the Court's communications strategy. End summary.

[1](#)2. (U) In his letter to Lozi, the King highlighted the importance of continuing the reforms and modernization initiatives already under way to address "all the challenges" confronting Jordan. The King's letter also stressed the need for cooperation among all "state institutions" in order to achieve comprehensive economic development.

Nasser Lozi: East Bank Bridge-BUILDER

[1](#)3. (U) Lozi, who holds a civil engineering degree from the University of Texas, served in a number of cabinet posts from 1996 to 1999, including concurrently as Minister of Public Works and Housing and Minister of Transport from August 1998 to March 1999. Lozi also served as Chairman of the Arab Orient Insurance Company, and since 2006 has served as Chairman of Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ). The son of former Prime Minister and Speaker of the Senate Ahmed Al-Lozi, he is also the nephew of former Prime Minister Abdul-Karim Al-Kabariti.

[1](#)4. (C) Lozi is well-known to the Embassy and an effective interlocutor; in recent discussions about production delays for new RJ aircraft, he was a voice of reason and able to see the bigger picture, not just the impact on Jordan. His appointment reflects the King's desire to bring in a known commodity and a bridge-builder to succeed the increasingly controversial Awadallah (Refs A-C). Former PM Fayez Al-Tarawneh, in an October 6 conversation with Ambassador, characterized Lozi as a compromiser who is not identified with any particular constituency -- neither conservative nor liberal -- and does not have any political enemies. Nawaf

Tel, Director of the University of Jordan's Center for Strategic Studies and scion of the East Banker establishment, described Lozi as "acceptable to everyone," predicting that he will "keep the doors of the Royal Court open," i.e., re-open lines of communication which were seen as closed -- or at best one-way -- during Awadallah's tenure.

Ayman Safadi: Communications Guru or Media Watchdog?

¶5. (C) Safadi, who will hold the rank and salary of a cabinet minister, will serve as an advisor to the King and Director of the Royal Court Communication and Information Directorate. Previously he was chief editor of pro-reform daily Al-Ghad and the English-language Jordan Times. He has also been spokesperson for the UN mission in Iraq, Director-General of the Jordan Radio and Television Corporation, Royal Court senior press officer, and media advisor to Prince Hassan. Safadi is expected to name a deputy in 2-3 months to oversee day-to-day operations in the directorate while Safadi focuses on his advisory role.

¶6. (C) It appears that Safadi's responsibilities will be broader than those of his predecessor, Amjad Adayleh. According to Jordanian Press Association President and Al-Rai Chief Editor Abdul Wahhab Zugheilat, a close associate, Safadi will have significant input on policy matters, including local, regional and international briefs. Observers generally view Safadi's appointment as an indication of the King's intention to bring about major transformation in the Kingdom's media sector, while helping to shape a more effective communications strategy to deal with the rumor-mongering and ad hominem attacks that have plagued the media and the GOJ in recent months (Ref D). Some contacts in the media -- Al-Ghad Deputy Editor-in-Chief Saad Hattar and Director of the independent Ammannet community radio station Daoud Kuttub -- have expressed concern that East Banker Safadi's past closeness to the government may imply a focus on reining in the media.

¶7. (C) Comment: Awadallah's departure, which came quietly on the eve of the Eid holiday, should signal an end to the summer's raucous mud slinging and character attacks and pave the way for the Government and Parliament to focus on their substantive agenda (Ref E). The exact extent of the roles to be played by Lozi and Safadi remains unclear, but media reports and Embassy contacts suggest the Royal Court will seek to advance the reform agenda while avoiding the divisiveness and public sparring which cost the King one of his closest lieutenants. Whether anti-reform agitators are content with the shift, or simply cast about for a new target for their unhappiness, remains to be seen.

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